

DRIVER'S SEAT

Soldier Utilization: Mission and Men

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Since Fiscal Year 1990, we have seen a 32 percent drawdown in the Armor enlisted force, from 26,112 to 17,742. As we continue to downsize, the responsibility of leaders, to our missions and our soldiers, will require us to make sure we properly utilize the soldiers under our control.

The first leader involved in this area, the unit command sergeant major, must actively manage enlisted personnel assignments within his unit. By thoroughly screening records and being in tune with the needs and missions of the unit, he can place soldiers in the best positions, both for their careers and the good of the unit. However, the CSM is not alone in this assignment process.

Commanders and first sergeants must track their personnel by MOS, assigning them to the proper paragraph and line number within the unit. All members of the chain of command must inform their soldiers about staying on a good career track (See CMF 19 Career Development Model) and its impact on

a soldier's promotion possibilities. Good soldiers must be given the opportunity to compete for such prestigious awards as the Soldier of the Month/Year, Sergeant Morales and Audie Murphy Clubs, and the Excellence in Armor program (EIA). Encourage soldiers to take varied assignments, such as drill sergeant, recruiter, AC/RC duty, and instructor, just to name a few. Commanders must also be aware of the damage they can cause when they keep soldiers in key, non-leadership positions within their organization.

The master gunner position is a good example. This is a critical position that must be staffed by soldiers who are highly motivated, extremely competent, and show the potential for advancement; in short, a soldier who is a cut above the rest. But leaving a soldier in that position too long, and not giving him the chance to be a platoon sergeant, will not only stagnate the soldier, but also hinder his promotion possibilities.

Accomplish the mission, but not at the expense of a soldier's career.

The Armor Enlisted Professional Development Guide provides the commander with 12 rules for Armor NCO professional development. The first rule is "Work your soldiers in their Primary MOS." By keeping this rule in mind, we will properly utilize assigned soldiers.

The guide also tells the soldier what he must do to meet minimal standards of branch qualification in each grade, and how to become eligible for the next higher grade. The soldier must also play a key role in his own career development. If he is misassigned, he must inform the chain of command that the present assignment is not advantageous to his career. If he is in an unauthorized or invalid position, he must take the appropriate steps to be released and reassigned to a unit authorized his MOS and grade. The soldier must pay close attention to Item 35 on his DA Form 2-1 and the job title on the NCOER. Additionally, the job that he is doing must match with the paragraph and line number on the DA Form 2A. The bottom line: the soldier must seek out and excel in hard jobs to further his career.

Generally, the Armor community is doing a fine job utilizing Armor soldiers. As the Army continues to downsize, it is our responsibility as leaders to ensure our soldiers receive the training and leadership positions necessary for career advancement. We must continue to challenge our soldiers, properly utilize them within our units, and give them challenging and diversified assignments. The soldier too must be willing to seek hard jobs which hone his skills and prepare him to fight, if necessary, on any battlefield in the world. Doing these things will ensure a strong and viable Armor Force and prepare our soldiers for the XXIst Century.

